



# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

## Citizen Customer Service Survey 1999

### Executive Summary

#### Background

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The Governor's Office contracted with WSU Research Center to conduct a statewide telephone survey in July and August 1999. The purpose of the survey was to determine the quality of service provided by state agencies and identify customer expectations for services. They interviewed 874 households for an average of 15 minutes with a sample error of plus/minus 5%.

Citizens were asked to recall a specific experience with state government during the past year when answering the questions. The following list of state services was provided for reference:

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Business & Occupation tax | Public Assistance         |
| Workers Compensation      | Information on rules/regs |
| Business Licensing        | State data services       |
| Professional Licensing    | Drivers Licensing         |
| State Parks               | Other                     |
| Unemployment Insurance    |                           |

#### Survey Highlights

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| Example of some questions and responses:   | % Agree |
|--|---------|
| 1. Government has a more difficult task providing services than the private sector   | 66%     |
| 2. The quality of services has improved over the last two years  | 60%     |
| 3. Employees treat public fairly regardless of age, gender, race, culture, or ability  | 71%     |
| 4. State employees who deal directly with the public are properly trained and qualified  | 59%     |
| 5. The most important aspect of service <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 63% say ability of staff to solve problems with you</li><li>- 18% say how long you have to wait to receive service</li></ul> |         |
| 6. 4 out of 5 times state services get a good overall grade  |         |
| 7. 9 out of 10 times citizens said that in the end they got what they needed, without error, by a staff that was courteous, competent, and respectful.   |         |

## **Citizens' Expectations**

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- Expectations about the quality of service that they should receive from State Government are high. 44% expect better service from government than from the private sector. 50% expect the same level of service.
- 94% said it was important to reach a real person rather than voice mail (82% said very important)
- Most preferred way to contact an agency – 66% phone, 24% in person and 6% Internet or web
- Acceptable time to wait for voice or email return was one day
- Acceptable time to wait for letter return was one week.

## **How to Improve Government Services**

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Several questions asked for priority recommendations for improving state services. Here are some of their suggestions.

1. When asked about how accessible government services were - 86% were generally satisfied. But when asked how we could improve, 22% said be more easily reached by phone and 40% said to offer more ways of access (i.e. Internet, web, email, phone, fax).
2. 58% said to make it easier to find out how to get service
3. 32% want staff to be more competent and 31% asked to have more up-to-date information.

## **Additional Information**

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- When asked 77% said they had access to a Personal Computer, 65% have access to the Internet, and 56% use e-mail.
- There was no significant variability in the responses from the different geographic regions (Western and Eastern Washington and rural and urban areas)
- Communication of information is clearly important to citizens, but the various services have different problems. For example, B&O tax staff explanations appear to be a strong point, but written materials need improvement, while Unemployment Insurance results are the opposite. Across the board, making it easier to find out how to get service was a leading recommendation on how to improve communications, even for a service as well publicized as State Parks. Not surprisingly, recipients of Unemployment Insurance and Public Assistance put a premium on getting clearer explanations from staff.

## **What's Next**

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Agencies have been asked to use this data to assist them in establishing customer service standards for their agency. This data should augment customer satisfaction data that they are collecting at the program level. The complete data set has been made available to all agencies to do further analysis of the services they provide. The results of the survey are posted on the Governor's Home Page at [www.governor.wa.gov](http://www.governor.wa.gov).